

## CREATING THE CONTAINER: PREPPING FOR A GREAT CONVERSATION

Sometimes fantastic conversations happen naturally under the most unlikely of circumstances, but if you want to stack the communication deck in your favor there are some things you can do. Whenever you host a conversation you want to create the container in which the communication can flourish. Creating the container means setting the rules, expectations, and tone for the conversation. Here are 3 things to do to make the best container, and 6 questions to ask yourself and your conversation guests to set the right tone.

### 3 THINGS TO DO FOR A GREAT CONVERSATION



**1. Agree on a time and stick to it.** Think carefully about how much time you'll need for the conversation and tell the other participants how long the conversation will take. Most conversations can go longer than planned. It's your job as a host to make sure this doesn't happen. If a meeting runs over it makes people feel like their time isn't important to others. Conversations that run overtime can quickly spiral out of control. However, there are exceptions! If you're in a one-on-one conversation and the other person really needs to talk you might want to give them the time to do so.

**2. Make an agenda but remain flexible.** It's good to give conversation participants advance notice of the topics to be discussed. However, you want to avoid dictating the meeting. Use some of the questions below to invite others to get involved in the agenda.



**3. Set norms.** Especially for group meetings it's a good idea to set norms and remind the group of them over time. Expectations around cell phone use, email checking and note typing are all good things to agree upon ahead of time. Norms around confidentiality are also crucial to talk about up front.

### 3 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE HOSTING A CONVERSATION

- Is this the right time to have this conversation and if not what adjustments do I need to make?
- How can I show up most effectively for this conversation?
- If I were on the other side of this conversation, what would I need to make it go smoothly?

### 3 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CONVERSATION PARTNERS

- What do you want to get out of this meeting?
- What was the most recent great conversation that you had? What made it special?
- What is something positive that happened in your day?

